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Congress of the United States
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June 16, 2020

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
New York State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo,

It is an understatement to say New York City's restaurant industry has been decimated by the COVID-19 pandemic. If governments at the state and federal levels don't collaborate now on swift action to address this, our restaurateurs and workers may never recover. That is why I write in strong support of the Independent Restaurant Owners Association Rescue's proposal for the use of outdoor and indoor space and urge you to consider expedited reopening for one of the hardest-hit industries in our city.

While the New York State guidance for Phase 2 of reopening indicates that outdoor capacity can be utilized by restaurants, and the expected Phase 2 date for New York City of June 22 gives hope to small business owners across the boroughs, it is sadly not enough. A New York City Hospitality Alliance study indicates that restaurants will need to be open at 70% capacity in order to prevent closures, including indoor capacity. It would be a slap in the face to restaurant owners to allow gradual reopening during Phases 2 and 3, when the data shows that closures under these guidelines are inevitable. Opening restaurants at 50% indoor capacity during Phase 2, in addition to the outdoor dining capacity currently allowed, could be the only saving grace of these businesses - in doing so, these restaurants must adhere to social distancing, face covering, and other public health guidance.

Our role in government is to mitigate risk - it is impossible to eliminate all risk and embarking on that fool's errand will only serve to place businesses and livelihoods in jeopardy. I strongly reiterate that urgent measures need to be taken to save these businesses - this same recent study indicated that over 70% of restaurants in New York failed to pay their May rent in its entirety. With expenses compounding, restaurant owners are not just worrying about surviving through Phase 2 - they are worried about still being in business by the end of the summer. That is why I urge you to implement Phase 3 for New York City by Fourth of July weekend, and ensure that at least 75% of indoor capacity is able to be utilized by restaurants in conjunction with significant monitoring of COVID-19 cases and statistics to ensure we are reopening safely and efficiently.

All that our business owners are asking for is a chance to return to normal, and a real shot at surviving the economic disaster that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused them. Let's work together to get this done.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'mrose', followed by a long horizontal line.

Max Rose
Member of Congress